

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /031 W

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O 291157Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8981

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4347

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SF US

SUBJ: PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH CONGRESSMAN DIGGS'

DESIRE FOR PRESS CONFERENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY OFFICERS MET WITH CHAIRMAN DIGGS AND PARTY AT JAN SMUTS AIRPORT THIS MORNING. DURING COURSE OF OUR DISCUSSION, CHAIRMAN DIGGS EMPHASIZED HE WANTED TO MEET WITH PRESS SATURDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 1, DURING HIS TWO-HOUR STOP AT JAN SMUTS ENROUTE FROM MASERU TO NAIROBI.

2. EARLIER EMBASSY HAD INFORMED DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAT CHAIRMAN DIGGS WISHES TO MEET WITH PRESS DECEMBER 1. ISSUE AROSE BECAUSE CONGRESSMAN NOT ADMITTED AS VISITOR TO SOUTH AFRICA AND DFA FACILITATION ENTRY OF PRESS TO TRANSIT CONTROLLED AREA IS INVOLVED. (THIS ACTUALLY VIP ROOMS WHICH ARE BEING MADE AVAILABLE FOR CODEL.) INITIAL RESPONSE CONVEYED BY DFA SENIOR WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS WAS NEGATIVE. SUBSEQUENTLY AMBASSADOR PERSONALLY RAISED ISSUE WITH FONSEC FOURIE, WHO SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER. AS OF THIS MORNING WE HAVE NO DECISION FROM SAG.

3. WHEN WE CONVEYED FOREGOING TO CHAIRMAN DIGGS AND TOLD HIM IT DISTINCTLY POSSIBLE SAG DECISION WOULD BE NEGATIVE, HE SUGGESTED FOLLOWING CONTINGENCY PLAN IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENT PERMISSION FOR HIM TO MEET PRESS WAS DENIED. WE TO INFORM PRESS THAT CHAIRMAN DIGGS WOULD BE AT JAN SMUTS IN TRANSIT ARA AND DESIROUS OF MEETING WITH THEM BUT DENIED OPPORTUNITY DO SO BY SAG. WE WOULD THEN SOLICIT

FROM JOURNALISTS QUESTIONS THEY WOULD WISH TO PUT TO CHAIRMAN DIGGS. WE WOULD RELAY QUESTIONS TO CONGRESSMAN WHO WOULD READ THEM AND HIS RESPONSES. THIS WOULD BE TAPE RECORDED BY USIS STAFF MEMBER AND CONTENTS OF TAPE AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF CODEL WOULD THEN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PRESS.

4. AMBASSADOR TOLD CHAIRMAN DIGGS THAT HE COULD NOT ON HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY ACCEDE TO THE CHAIRMAN'S REQUEST AND WOULD HAVE TO ASK ADVICE FROM DEPARTMENT. IF, AND AGAIN IT DISTINCTLY POSSIBLE, SAG TURNS DOWN REQUEST FOR PRESS CONFERENCE AND WE PROCEED AS SUGGESTED BY CHAIRMAN DIGGS, WE WILL, OF COURSE, BE DIRECTLY CONFRONTING THE SAG. WE CANNOT GAUGE RAMIFICATIONS OF THEIR DISPLEASURE BUT SHOULD POINT OUT THIS ACTION LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN SERIOUS LIGHT. INITIAL RESPONSE MENTIONED PARA TWO ABOVE WAS IN TERMS THAT CONGRESSMAN WAS BEING ACCOMMODATED IN TRANSIT AND ANY EFFORT ARRANGE PRESS CONFERENCE WOULD BE QUOTE IMPROPER END QUOTE AND VIOLATION OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PURPOSE FOR WHICH FACILITIES HAD BEEN EXTENDED.

5. BECAUSE OF SHORTNESS OF TIME, WE WILL NEED DEPARTMENT'S ADVICE BY FRIDAY MORNING LOCAL TIME AT LATEST. IN MEANTIME, AS SOON AS WE RECEIVE SAG'S RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST THAT CHAIRMAN DIGGS BE PERMITTED TO MEET WITH PRESS DURING SATURDAY TRANSIT, WE WILL CONVEY IT TO DEPARTMENT.
HURD

CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 11 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PRESS COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PRETOR04347
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750020-2018
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731166/abqcegrv.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Jan-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <04-Feb-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH CONGRESSMAN DIGGS' DESIRE FOR PRESS CONFERENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA
TAGS: PFOR, SF, US
To: STATE INFO USIA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005